

DESIGNING A TRANSIT-ORIENTED NEIGHBORHOOD: THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEFINED CENTER



A defined neighborhood center serves as the focus of community life. Six key design principles refocus new investment to recreate traditional centers to take advantage of existing transit facilities to create pedestrian friendly retail, entertainment, employment educational, and housing options for all community members.

CONCEPTS

A successful transit-oriented neighborhood center....

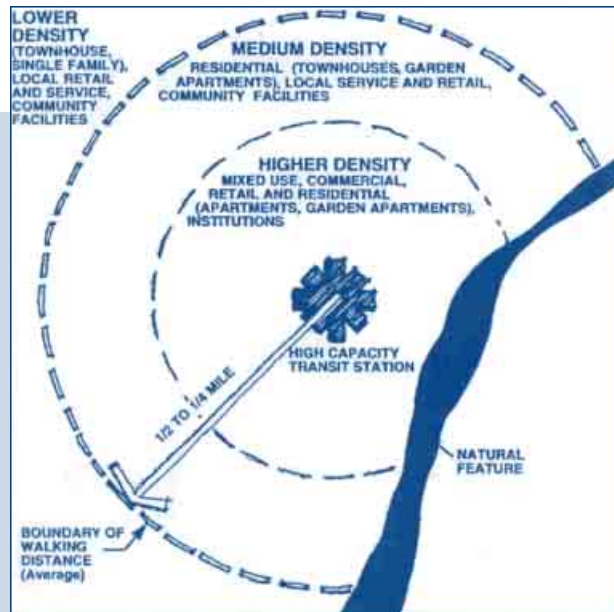
- Is a core of compact development focused around bus and rail stations.
 - Is the center of community life by providing opportunities to shop, work, live, learn and play.
 - Has a defined boundary and character distinct from the surrounding neighborhood.
- Emphasizes six key design principles:
 1. Orientation & Connectivity
 2. Quality Public Realm & Amenities
 3. Pedestrian Friendly, Safe Environment
 4. Attractive Architecture & Design
 5. Mix of Uses
 6. Creative Parking Management



A defined neighborhood center integrates basic design principles into one lively pedestrian environment accessible by transit.

GUIDELINES

This chapter focuses on six design principles that can create vibrant centers focused on transit, while enhancing unique neighborhood characteristics. Most of these principles are evident in different combinations throughout Washington, DC; however, they can be combined to have a greater impact in reinforcing patterns of development friendly to transit and walking to increase neighborhood vitality.



A transit-oriented neighborhood has a defined center focused around high quality transit. Activity and density decreases with distance from the center.

Source: New Jersey Transit

A. Integrate the six design principles to create compact development around rail and bus facilities:

1. CONNECTIVITY

A transit-oriented neighborhood center must be connected to neighborhood destinations, different travel modes, and activity centers throughout the District and region.

2. QUALITY PUBLIC REALM

A network of public spaces must be provided to create a sense of place and promote pedestrian activity.

3. PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Physical design, infrastructure, and land uses promote walking, biking and transit use to increase activity and deter crime.

4. ATTRACTIVE ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

Quality design should integrate all components of a transit-oriented neighborhood to reflect one unified, attractive environment.

5. MIX OF USES

A variety and intensity of land use and activities should be provided within walking distance of transit facilities.

6. CREATIVE PARKING MANAGEMENT

Parking should be managed so that automobile access is balanced with transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel.

B. Create an environment that supports transit use and neighborhood investment.

- Promote compact development around transit facilities to shift neighborhood focus from automobile travel by making many daily activities accessible by transit and walking.
- Create a street wall of buildings to provide retail, employment and housing opportunities that open onto the sidewalk, defining a vibrant walking environment with access to transit.
- Stimulate reinvestment in neighborhoods by creating a variety of development opportunities. Access to many destinations and transit results in a compact vibrant environment.



Undesirable

CONNECTIVITY



Providing compact development at transit facilities shifts focus from automobile travel requiring extensive parking (above), to emphasize walking and transit as the dominant modes of travel to and from the neighborhood center (below).

Desirable



MIX OF USES



Automobile uses such as wide road or large, barren parking lots create a hostile and unsafe pedestrian and neighborhood environment (above). Continuous development along the street with an active mix of uses creates a welcoming place for pedestrians to shop and dine (below).



ATTRACTIVE ARCHITECTURE



Deteriorating properties can be a burden on neighborhoods, but also an opportunity for reinvestment (above). Infill development can strengthen a community and create new opportunities for housing, retail, and employment (below).



C. The neighborhood center should be focused at the transit stop, intensifying uses within a comfortable walk of transit and tapering away in intensity away from transit access.

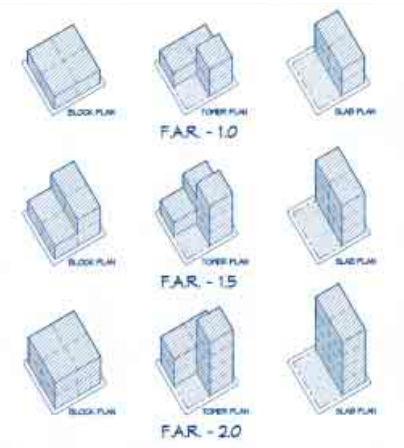
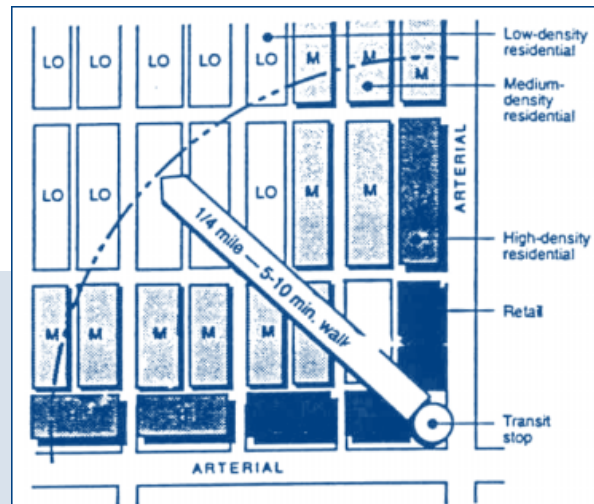
- A general guideline for a comfortable walking distance is a 5-minute walk (roughly 1/4 mile or 1,250 feet) to transit stations or stops.
- The boundary of the transit-oriented area is within a 10-minute walk of high quality transit—typically 1/2 mile or 2,500 foot from the stop.
- Increase intensity of uses and activities in the neighborhood center to create a variety of opportunities within walking distance of transit stations and support local neighborhood retail.
- Decrease development intensity at perimeter of the defined center to relate to the surrounding neighborhood.
- The boundaries will vary and adapt to the neighborhood. Generally speaking, people will walk further to employment and housing than they will to retail services.

Intensity of uses decline with distance from the defined neighborhood center and comfortable, convenient use of transit .
Source: Chicago Transit Authority

WHAT IS FAR?

FAR refers to Floor Area Ratio, the ratio of the total building floor area to parcel area. FAR is used to measure the density of commercial mixed used development and certain intense housing types (apartments and town houses). FAR requirements ensure the appropriate intensity of development occurs within the neighborhood center and may vary depending on neighborhood characteristics and transit facilities.

FAR usually sets a maximum level of development. To assure the goals of compact, transit-oriented development, minimum FAR requirements may be more appropriate.



Different building shapes may produce the same FAR
Source: Cunningham + Quill Architects